



# hands on

Stories, ideas & news from Kids Friendly | ISSUE 17 | August 2010

Presbyterian Church  
of Aotearoa New Zealand



## Grand Power

### Why do you do what you do?

Whenever I run training for children's leaders, I always start the workshop by asking participants to say to a partner: "I give my love, passion and commitment to this ministry because..." The reason I do this is because when we realise our ministry is a reflection of our values, we feel so much more enthusiastic about it. We shift from feeling obliged, to feeling called. "When we name and live by our values it's as if we are living at true north. And when we surrender our values we are living at magnetic north," says values coach and author Michael Henderson (Finding True North). After reading his book many years ago, I realised that I minister to the children of our church and community because I want to share the love of God with them. My childhood school teacher, Sister Judith, told me Jesus lives in my heart and will never leave me. She advised

me to talk to this heart-friend always. This has sustained me all my life and continues to motivate my ministry.

In this issue we share the stories of some of our "older" children's ministers. While many of our churches are "ageing" this does not mean they can't be wonderful ministers and mentors to children. It's so encouraging to meet these folk and catch their enthusiasm for their ministry. Ministering to children is a gift not just to the children but to the leader. Our "Grand Power" stories are testament to this.

Thank you for all of you who continue to send me your "success" stories. I feel so privileged to be able to share them with others. They are a blessing to me and many others who are called to minister to children. God bless.

Jill

## Did you know?



When a young person is mentored by an older person he/she has better attendance at and attitudes towards school, higher grades, positive relationships with all ages and social attitudes including helping behaviours, increased self-worth and empathy. When we look at churches who intentionally partner young and old members, we notice similar benefits and find that young people tend to stick around. Researcher Rollie Martinson of the Luther Seminary confirms that young people who stay active in churches are those who are invited to lead and share their gifts with their church.

**Transformers Raising Up Young Leaders** is an initiative of Kids Friendly to help churches recognise children's gifts and to encourage their contributions. Every child attending a Transformers weekend camp is accompanied by an adult mentor from their church. Our next Transformers camp is in the Wellington Presbytery in September. To find out more about Transformers, or book a camp date with Kids Friendly see: [www.presbyterian.org.nz/training-and-coaching#transformers](http://www.presbyterian.org.nz/training-and-coaching#transformers).

**GROWING LEADERS** is a new workshop from Kids Friendly that explores why we should encourage leadership in our young people and ways to do this. For a list of Kids Friendly workshops see: [www.presbyterian.org.nz/training-and-coaching#kidsfriendlytraining](http://www.presbyterian.org.nz/training-and-coaching#kidsfriendlytraining).

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# A Grandmother in God

Benita Barton has been a children's minister for 59 years. Her immense experience and incredible passion and commitment for ministering to children is such an encouragement to many. I asked her to share why she loves doing what she does. Her story about one of the many children she ministers to, reflects her spirit.

"Briana is 11 years old and attends the local school that our church ministers to. She has had a troubled upbringing and lives with her grandmother but still sees her mother. Life for Briana is not easy. She struggles at school and with relating to her teachers. One of whom suggested to me that there are two Briana's - one in the classroom and one at church. We hope that in time the Briana we love will endure in all her walks of life. The story of Briana's arrival at St Mark's is a good one to tell.

One Sunday in October 2008 when 86 year old Myra Allen was walking to church, she met 9 year old Briana. "Where are you going Mrs Allen?" asked Briana. Myra had taught bible-in-schools at Briana's school for several years. "To church" said Myra. "What do you do there?" asked Briana. "Why don't you come and find out but let someone know where you are going," answered Myra. So Briana came and returned in the afternoon to pack boxes for



Operation Christmas Child and have a meal. She has been in church most Sundays ever since. We always know when she's arrived because we are welcomed by noisy piano playing. She has also joined my music programme and I look forward to the day when she is ready to play a simple voluntary in church. Briana blossoms when she has the opportunity to be "a star" and we try to see that the need is met, as we do for all our children.

Last year Briana asked to be baptised. After a bit of a wait due our minister being away on sick leave, she was finally baptised on June 13th. Several members of her "unchurched" family and a group of friends came. Briana rarely comes to church without bringing someone with her and there are now about five young people who come with her. One of our "church" families has "adopted" the girls from one family and another who knows Briana's extended family fills me in on what is happening so we can offer appropriate care and support.

Ours is a small, struggling congregation but one thing we can offer is close enriching relationships. The children become very much part of my "family" and I see myself as a "Grandmother in God" who is called to nurture each child in Christian faith.

# Grandparents Wanted

Friendships between old and young greatly benefit both parties. And churches are one of the few places where children can meet wise, old friends. Unfortunately too many older people are shy or reticent to befriend children and youth, but when a church seeks to intentionally facilitate these friendships, blessings often ensue.

At its annual Grandparents Sunday, St Heliers Presbyterian asks its older members to adopt a "grandchild" for the morning with the hope that the relationship will continue during the year. My son Blake asked if Raewyn our church pianist could be his church grandma a couple of years ago. On Grandparent Sunday he gets the privilege of sitting next to her at the grand piano and playing duets during the offering. Raewyn now visits Blake regularly at home to encourage his piano playing. She also brings him gifts for Christmas and birthdays and visits him if he is sick. This holidays she took him to a children's musical. Recently Raewyn was sick so Blake and I made her some soup, wrote her a card and visited her. Blake greatly appreciates his older church friend Raewyn and knows that she cares for him and misses him if he doesn't make it to church.

Jill



**If you would like to organise a Grandparent Sunday contact the Kids Friendly office for a sample order of service, activity ideas, poems on grandparents and more.**

# Grand Glee

11 years ago a group of grandmothers from St Andrew's Matamata had a vision to start a crèche at their church on Friday mornings. Their aim was to give support to young mums and caregivers by enabling them time off to attend appointments, exercise or just have time out. They invited all young parents in their community to bring their children to the "Glee Club". An average of 16 toddlers are supervised by grandparents with granddads being especially good at overseeing active boys. Many parents choose to stay, enjoying the fellowship and hospitality and an opportunity to meet other parents and play with their children. "The many wonderful intergenerational friendships that have grown out of the Glee Club has surpassed our original vision," says Val Raynel, co-ordinator.



St Andrew's has wonderful warm and comfortable Kids Friendly facilities with a resident toy library which makes it a perfect environment for such an outreach. Craft, baking, puzzles, playdough and painting are just some of the activities offered. Guest speakers are sometimes invited to share parenting and other skills with parents. Morning tea is a sit down affair with lots of praise for good manners. And birthdays are a highlight with lots of appropriate celebration.

"Glee Club is a wonderful opportunity for older people to support and encourage new parents," says Val, "and the grandparents' reward is lots of cuddles from their little friends."

This outstanding hospitality and friendship is communicating the love of Christ to the young families of Matamata.

**What glee!**



# Groovy Grannies

Mums and toddlers come from far and wide to attend the Epsom Presbyterian Church Mainly Music led by the Groovy Grannies. Seven Grandmas with 30 grandchildren between them, arrive at 8 am each Tuesday to transform the hall into a warm and welcoming place for the children and their caregivers to start at 9.30.

"Seven of us started the ministry in 2004 and we have been joined by one mum who didn't want to leave when her daughter started school," says Groovy Granny Maureen Meyer. "Most of us have attended Epsom church since childhood and have a heart for connecting with the children and families of our community."

Each session of 35 parents and children (15 families are on the waiting list to join) is a fun-filled morning of action songs, stories, art and the famous morning tea from the Groovy Grannies cafe.

"One of our fathers with wood turning abilities made us a sign 'Groovy Grannies Café' which has pride of place above the kitchen servery. We serve home baking and tea and coffee in bone china cups. Our intent is to make the parents and children feel really special."

In addition to their Tuesday sessions, the Groovy Grannies also plan theme days and special events such as picnics and pizza night for families.

"This year we hosted and cooked a candlelight dinner for about twenty mothers and one father for Mother's day. Our team takes pride in their catering skills and are always keen to share their recipes and culinary hints."

And after running an action packed session, tidying up, packing toys away, rolling up mats, stacking

cushions, washing dishes and scraping the last vestiges of playdough off the floor, the Groovy Grannies gather with their arms around each other and give thanks to God for another time of camaraderie, fun, fellowship and the energy to provide a meaningful witness to the community.

**Now that's GROOVY!**



**Groovy Grannies Team:** June MacKay, Margaret Alchin, Diane McCrae, Shirley McKenzie, Pam Boshier, Janet Millar, Cecilia Hsu and Maureen Meyer.

# Looking Out

by Roger Harrington

Three years ago St Andrew's, Invercargill was on its knees - literally.

We faced closure as the congregation was in decline and the average age of parishioners was over 70. So we prayed and recommitted ourselves to God asking Him to lead us into the future. St Andrew's had been an inward looking bible-based church and we sensed from God that it was time to look out. We had an idea of gifting our neighbours packets of Easter Buns with a message saying: "The time of Easter is a special time for us as we remember that Jesus died on the cross for you and me. This is a gift from St Andrew's church." We gave out 1200 buns to appreciative neighbours including folk in nearby flats. Our contact with residents led us to inviting some men to a men's breakfast. Four came. Some had marriage, gambling and alcohol problems. Two of these men gave their lives to God and have joined the church, prayer and study groups and are even contributing to leadership.

This initial success spurred us on to seek more opportunities for connecting with our community. I read an article in a Christian magazine about an artist, Graham Braddock, who was teaching young people to paint and draw. This inspired us to offer art classes with the help of a gifted artist. This attracted children from all over the city. We approached two local schools to ask them to advertise our course. One turned us down, but the other was keen to chat to us about how else we could work together to serve the community. The principal told us they had funding to build a school garden but no parents would help. We took it to our church and they agreed to help. This involvement with the children and teachers at New River School was a turning point for our church. Environment Southland heard about our work and awarded us the Community Award for Southland including \$1000. We decided to give this back to our school as a \$250 gift voucher each year for four years to be awarded to a senior pupil who shows outstanding leadership during the year. The media got hold of the story and next minute our church was on the local TV and in the newspaper.

After finishing the garden we asked if there was something else we could do for the school. The principal asked if we could help with remedial reading for struggling children. 10 adults go to school weekly to hear these children read. This is yet another marvellous opportunity to build a relationship with these young people. And now many of these kids come to our ICONZ group. Who would have thought that a 76 year old man would go back to school to read and talk with children? And what a blessing it is to us and the



children. When we go to school the children greet us with big smiles and hugs.

The school now holds its end of year break-up, Anzac services and concerts at St Andrew's church. 90% of these children had never entered a church before this.

This year we gave out Easter buns to all the children with a simple message about Easter. We now have ten of our people teaching Bible in this school, the highest number in the city.

We now have employed Teina Marie, as a chaplain to the school and Valoa Jack as a youth worker to the secondary school. This was made possible by generous funding from the Synod of Otago and Southland.

As a result of the work of these leaders and many others in our church, 12 young people have given their lives to God and attend weekly study and leadership groups. A youth service is held monthly and last time 27 young people sang, read the Bible and prayed with guidance from the leaders. This has not been seen at St Andrew's for the last 25 years.

My wife Marie and I now also distribute unsold baking donated by a local supermarket each week to struggling families in our community. As we deliver this food we connect with people and witness for Christ as we serve them in love. Many of these people have joined our church. We are now a multi cultural church that is once again growing.

What has happened at St Andrew's is beyond belief. But it's what can happen when you take a step of faith and let God lead you out of your comfort zone.

## 10 tips from St Andrew's:

- Commit your mission to God.
- Make friends with a local school and offer some practical help.
- Don't "bible bash" or preach but build a caring relationship with the teachers and pupils.
- Make the church facilities available to the school and community.
- Prioritise your ministry to children through groups such as ICONZ, their parents will follow.
- Listen out for opportunities.
- Be bold, don't be put off by doubters in your church, they will change when they see the results.
- Doing ministry is key if you want your church to grow.
- Identify your people's gifts and encourage them to use them.
- If you can't do it on your own, join with another church to release funds and grow a missional church.